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MY REASON
AND
MY FAITH IN HARMONY

WILLIS NEVINS

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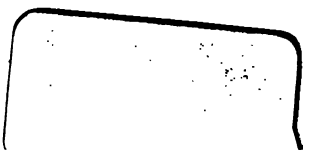

MY REASON

AND

MY FAITH IN HARMONY.

BY

WILLIS NEVINS,

AUTHOR OF
"THE JESUITS AND OTHER ESSAYS,"
"THE EMPEROR JULIAN'S ARGUMENTS AGAINST CHRISTIANS," ETC.

Be ye more staid,
O Christians, not, like feather, by each wind
Removable; nor think to cleanse yourselves
In every water. Either Testament,
The old and new, is yours: and for your guide
The Shepherd of the Church. Let this suffice
To save you.—*Dante.*

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE:
14, HENRIETTA ST., COVENT GARDEN, LONDON:
AND 20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH.
1876.

141. m. 412.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE hardly ever written for Catholics, as a Convert I feel such is not my sphere of duty. I have written for non-Catholics, endeavouring to say what I had to say as pointedly and plainly as possible. Men will not, as a rule, read long-winded discourses or lay-sermons; they will read a short work if it appeals to them as men and not as effeminate kid-gloved individuals. One example I give—(more might be thought egotistical). A young officer in the Navy took away with him a copy of *The Jesuits and other Essays*, (a book of which the *Tablet* said, "We might suggest a little more polish in the style of the shorter tracts;") writing to me some time after, he said that missing it one day he made inquiries and found a brother officer had seen it and was reading it, another did the same, and so at last nearly all his companions got instilled into their minds some pointed thoughts in favour of the Jesuits and Catholic doctrines which, if I had written the book in the polished manner suggested

by the *Tablet*, not one of them would have spent five minutes on.

One section of this book which I now publish, is mainly derived from Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought*, a work worthy of being in the hands of every thoughtful Christian.

A word in conclusion. I have reason to know that there are Catholics who are only too willing to scent heresy in the writings of any man who tries to put Truth before men by arguments, which perhaps to them are novel. Such men *stab you in the dark* by whispering—*heresy*. Calumny is a powerful weapon for a time, but the use of it is not a very honourable mode of action.

All that I have hitherto published has met with more or less of approval from men whose opinion is worth having, and in saying what I have, I use the only means in my power of protesting against underhand, narrow-minded heresy-hunters.

WILLIS NEVINS.

14, Grove Road,
St. John's Wood.
April, 1876.

I.—CHRISTIANITY AND ROME.

P. WHY are you a Catholic; you were born and brought up a Protestant?

C. Because I thought the Catholic Religion right and the Protestant wrong.

P. I hate turn-coats, a man should stick to the Religion he was born in.

C. Then St. Paul should have remained a Jew and not become a Christian.

P. That is not a case in point, for St. Paul believed, before, in Judaism; and Christianity was quite a different thing, but surely Protestants believe in Christ as well as Catholics?

C. Well, I am not so sure of that.

P. Do you mean to say that Protestants don't believe in Christ?

C. What do you mean by "believe in?"

P. What is the use of quibbling? you know what I mean.

C. No, I do not; for example, do you "believe in" Christ in the same way as the Devil does, for you remember St. James says the Devils "believe in" Christ?

P. What then do you mean when you say "believe in" Christ?

C. I mean that I believe He is what He represents Himself as being, and I believe all He said was true.

P. Just so, and do you think Protestants do not believe the same as you do about Christ?

C. They certainly don't. For example, Unitarians are Protestants and Unitarians do not believe that Christ is GOD.

P. Most Protestants don't agree with Unitarians.

C. That may be true in England, but in Germany and America thousands and thousands believe the same as Unitarians, besides you now show that only some Protestants believe that Christ is GOD, whereas you never met a Catholic who believed that Christ was not GOD.

P. Have you any more to say?

C. I don't think it would be much good

saying more than I have, unless you will be candid and honest.

P. I will admit whatever seems true, and I won't do more.

C. Quite enough. You ask me if I have anything more to say. I will ask you a question, —You believe Christ is GOD?

P. Yes.

C. GOD is everywhere?

P. Of course.

C. Do you believe that Christ is on the altar of every Catholic Church?

P. No. He is in Heaven and cannot be on the Altar.

C. You say GOD is everywhere?

P. Yes.

C. And Christ is GOD, so Christ is everywhere, so Christ can be on the Altar of every Catholic Church.

II.—PRIESTLY POWER.

P. You said one thing last night which I know is true, namely that no Catholic has ever denied Christ to be GOD, whereas Protestants have often done so.

C. Thanks for an honest admission, and I will draw a conclusion for you. Christ said He was GOD, Roman Catholics have always taught so, Protestants have not always, so on this most fundamental point, Catholics have been more faithful witnesses to the teaching of Christ than Protestants have been.

P. I said I would say what I thought, and so I say now, that you have made a strong point in favour of Rome. How is it you believe so much rubbish while at the same time you have never erred on questions about the Trinity and Incarnation?

C. It would be curious, if it were true, but I don't to the best of my knowledge believe in any "rubbish," unless Christ's words were rubbish, which would be a blasphemous idea.

P. Christ never taught that Priests could forgive sins.

C. Nor does the Catholic Church teach so.

P. Oh! come, that is very rich, I never heard a Catholic deny an Article of Faith before; so you are ashamed of some of the rubbish you have to swallow.

C. I say the Catholic Church does not teach that Priests can by their own powers forgive sins.

P. What on earth do you mean?

C. I mean this,—a Priest is only the instrument by whom sins are forgiven, and he does not possess power in himself to forgive sins but acts only as a delegate. Thus a Judge authorizes the sheriffs to hang a man, but a Judge has no inherent power in himself to condemn a man to death. He simply is appointed by a higher power to administer the law. A Priest has no power in himself to baptize, or consecrate the Eucharist, he simply acts as Christ's minister.

P. Give me an authority for this statement.

C. Fander's Catechism, of which I have on my table the fifth edition, Father Deharbe's transla-

tion. On page 276 is a question, "Why is the Sacrifice of the Mass the same sacrifice as that of the Cross? Because in both it is the same who *offers*, and who is *offered*, namely, Jesus Christ our Lord. The Priest is only the minister and visible representative of Christ; therefore, he does not speak in his own name, but in the name of Christ: 'This is My Body.'"

P. This seems quite a new way of putting it, and it does not go so much against the grain as the usual way I have heard it discussed.

C. Believe me when I say that ignorance is the great foe we Papists have to oppose. Supposing you were found drunk in the Strand and a Policeman collared you and walked you off to the Station—if you said to him "You have no power to do this?" He would reply "Yes I have!" If you asked where he got the power from, he would reply, "from my Sovereign whose servant I am." True, in the case I have imagined, you would very much dislike being dragged along, but you would see the man was only doing what he was told by your Sovereign, and therefore unless you were rebellious against

the highest power in the realm you would submit to delegated authority. There is no cry raised of Police-craft, and there is just as little sense in the other cry of Priest-craft. In either case, if relying on their office they claim power which is not theirs they will justly be condemned by all thinking men, because their arbitrary actions will throw discredit on their profession, and finally, on the Sovereign whose servants they are.

III.—THE POPE.

P. You have argued fairly about Priests, but how about the Pope and his authority.

C. What is your difficulty?

P. Why it is untrue and newfangled.

C. What is untrue.

P. That he is Infallible.

C. The Catholic Church does not teach that *he* is infallible any more than the Laws of England teach that a Judge is infallible.

P. What do you mean?

C. I mean that when a Judge gives judgment his *decision* is final, but because his decision is thus practically infallible, *he* is not infallible.

P. You mean a Pope is not considered Infallible in all he does?

C. God forbid that all things Popes have ever done should be considered infallibly right.

P. Well, when is a Pope infallible?

C. When it is necessary he should be infallible; for example, when the Christian world is agitated with some heresy and men ask "Which is the truth?" then the Chief Bishop of the Church of God says,—"Christ taught thus;" or, "The Church decrees so and so."

P. What is to prevent the Pope making mistakes?

C. I will divide my answer:

1st. Humanly speaking.

2nd. As a Catholic.

1st. The Pope has the Creeds which he cannot deny or in any way run counter to. There are the Apostles, Nicean, and Athanasian. There are the numerous decrees of Œcumenical Councils, and Canons and dogmatic Bulls issued by

his predecessors, none of which he can controvert.

This one would imagine must be a considerable curb on a runaway Pope!

2nd. As a Catholic I cannot believe that the Chief Bishop of the Christian Church can teach and compel Christians to believe—False Doctrine. Even the Jewish High Priest was in a degree infallible.

A slight knowledge moreover of History will show you that Europe owes not only her Christianity but her civilization to the Popes of Rome. If there had been no Popes, in all human probability Europe would be in the same condition as Turkey or Asia Minor is now.

Some Popes have been wicked, others treacherous and base, others have committed simony, others have hindered the spread of Religion through their actions, and yet taking the Popes and comparing them with either Sovereigns or other chief Bishops they come out from the test with palm branches.

IV.—TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

P. As you said the other evening Christ can, if He will, be especially present on the altar of every Catholic Church. It is not impossible, for GOD'S power is infinite, and indeed Christ is present "wherever two or three are gathered together in His name;" but although there is nothing unreasonable in Christ being present on the altar, yet it does seem unreasonable that the bread should be changed, because one sees no change take place as far as eye, touch or taste can judge, and if eye, touch, or taste, can be deceived, we may as well deny all evidence and be thorough going sceptics.

C. The matter is very simple, as you will I think acknowledge when you consider what I am going to say.

If you had been in Jerusalem during the trial of Jesus Christ, and, after His condemnation had gone to Calvary and witnessed the Crucifixion, what would have been visible on the cross to your eye and touch?

P. A man dying a painful death.

C. Anything else?

P. No, of course not.

C. And yet, as a Christian, you believe HE who hung on those two pieces of timber was GOD!

Well says one of our finest Catholic hymns,

> "In cruce latebat sola Deitas,
> At hic latet simul et Humanitas:
> Ambo tamen credens atque confitens,
> Peto quod petivit latro pœnitens.
> Ave Jesu, Pastor fidelium;
> Adauge fidem omnium in te credentium."

So you see your argument is a very dangerous one to use. But I will go on. Transubstantiation means change of substance. If I take an acorn and put it in the ground there is a life hid in that acorn which will produce in time a huge oak tree, and 500 years after the acorn was planted there will be something in that fine old oak which was in the acorn 500 years ago, that is its substance. And yet again, that acorn was but a production of an older oak, so you will see that the "substance" of a thing is not those

properties which are visible but what one may call the lifegiving principle or force. Apart from your soul there must be confined in your body now (say at the age of 40) something which was there when you were five minutes old. I mean you are the same person, and yet you know that every month you are an entirely different person as far as flesh and blood goes, from what you were a month ago. If you were foolish enough to deny this you might consider how some day if you had a huge dish and placed in it all which you were in the habit of eating and drinking in one day only, then consider how small a portion of that conglomeration *leaves the body*, and you will have a very good idea of the huge amount of daily waste of blood and flesh there must be for you to require so much food every day to make fresh blood and flesh and bone.

As then all which is visible in man changes daily and even hourly (for every day we breathe out pints of water), and yet there is a similar individuality there as when you were a boy, so with the Eucharist. The bread in all its proper-

ties, which *we can analyse*, is the same, and yet the "substance" is changed. I could burn the consecrated host, I could not thereby burn Christ. I could burn what is called the "accidents" of a thing, I could not burn its substance.

Substance or Force leads our thoughts upward by a beautiful succession to the throne of GOD and indeed GOD is even now in a certain wonderful sense "All *in* All."

It is curious while thus considering the marvel of "substance" to note the 1st verse of the 1st chapter of Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament and at the same time to observe the 1st verse of the 1st chapter of St. John's Gospel.

"In *the beginning* GOD created the Heaven and the Earth."

"In the beginning was the Word."

In the eighth chapter of Proverbs ver. 22, Wisdom says, "The Lord possessed me *in the beginning* of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. * * * When He prepared the heavens I was there."

I have somewhat gone into a partially side

question, but it lends light to a consideration of the Eucharist.

Christ has asked us to believe nothing which is absurd. Such things as He wished to teach us and to reveal to us He has enabled us to have the power of believing; some things which are puzzles to us He carefully left in the background, thereby showing us that our knowledge of Divine things is only partial. I allude to the origin of Evil.

P. While the way you treat the question of Transubstantiation makes it plain, it, at the same time, what I may say spiritualizes one's conception of Christian worship, but I must wait till I see you again before I enter into the questions which you have brought to the front.

CAUSE AND EFFECT.—FREE WILL.

P. Your mention of the acorn and the oak tree in connection with "substance" made me think of how everything created is linked with

its primeval parent, and so I have got away from our talk about Transubstantiation and have been thinking about the old question of Free-Will and "Cause and Effect."

C. All heresies have come into existence through orthodox people pushing forward some one truth without giving sufficient prominence to another truth, which while it does not neutralize the former yet enlarges and completes what would otherwise be imperfect. Calvinism was not a Protestant work. Calvin was born a Catholic. His heresy and that of those who taught with him was in great part a result of the gross abuse of Indulgences and the lasciviousness of a multitude of German Priests which led people (most unreasonably) to oppose Catholic Truth because of serious abuses.

If we follow a course we are obliged to, and so cease to be responsible, we deny Free-Will. But, for example,—Are you obliged to go and get drunk? Are you obliged to give way to vice in a sensual manner?

No, you are not. It is to use a common word, *bosh* to say so. But it is quite true that there is a

stern *anti*-free-will result from your free-will actions. Give way to drunkenness, and ask a doctor what will ultimately happen. He will tell you D. T. and mental decrepitude. Give way to sensuality, and again ask a doctor what will be the result. He will tell you what is well known to the medical profession that many young men whose faces were familiar at Oxford and elsewhere are now in lunatic asylums.

MIRACLES AND A FIRST CAUSE.

P. What makes you think me a bit of a humbug?

C. Why you began asking me questions about Priestly Power and Transubstantiation and now you have shot off at a tangent and ask questions which might make me think you were a Free-thinker.

P. You cannot believe for a moment that Protestants are able to feel secure in their belief

when the whole religious world in England is in a state of chaotic confusion, and so as you are a Papist and claim a rock-foundation for your Creed I want to know what you have to say to a few objections, which are constantly urged by men who glory in saying Nego rather than Credo.

C. What is your Brief?

P. I don't see why the great First Cause should interfere with His work, surely His laws should be changeless, and it is rather a derogatory notion to suppose Him acting and changeable.

C. You are in fact denying a special Providence, and are not consistent when you say you cannot conceive GOD as acting on this world. You should go back further. How can you conceive GOD as acting at all? That is the point, and not the very subordinate query as to why HE should act in one way rather than another.

But the very idea of a changeless law is to use a phrase which denotes time; thus we hedge in the *Infinite*, which is an absurdity. In short, how can you imagine that any change can take place at any moment; that anything can begin to

exist, which was not from all eternity. How can you conceive the Infinite Creator at any moment calling into existence a Finite World? It is to imply an *imperfection* either before the act or after it. If you deny miracles because a miracle implies a change or an interference you open a door which will be speedily used by the Atheist. Briefly I may say that the intellectual stumbling-blocks which men find in the doctrines of Revelation are not the consequence of improbability or error, but are inherent difficulties. The self-contradictions into which we fall when engaged in certain lines of speculation are beacons placed by the hand of GOD in the mind of man, to warn us that we are wandering from the path which HE wishes us to follow and that we are striving to pass the barriers which HE has planted around us.—(*See* Mansel's *Limits* &c.)

ETERNITY OF PUNISHMENT.

P. I suppose you will put the question of the "Eternity of Punishment" into the same category

as "The Existence of Evil" namely as above our comprehension and therefore useless to discuss?

C. I do. The Existence of Evil is a mystery, and as there are mysteries in the Natural order so there are in the Supernatural. I do not deny the mystery, but nevertheless it is easy to see that it is not incompatible to believe in the Existence of Evil and yet in a First Cause, viz., GOD. Supposing you had an implicit belief in the good faith and honour of a friend, a perfect cloudless faith; and you were told, and not only told, but it was proved to you that that friend had tried to destroy your honour and the honour of those nearest and dearest to you, what would you do? You would most carefully weigh and examine the alleged evil reports and would not believe them till you saw they were overwhelmingly strong, and then having proved your THEORY of the love of your friend destroyed, you would cease to accept it because the *facts* were stronger. I say then if you deny the existence of evil it is because you have formed for yourself a certain *theory* of the Infinite Being, a theory which must

vanish, because the fact is stronger than the theory. You must admit it is utterly futile to attempt to enter into the mind of the Infinite GOD with our finite comprehension. Granting this, it is perfectly possible there *may* be a way of reconciling the idea of an Eternal First Cause with the Existence of Evil and Misery. You *must* admit an Eternal First Cause *may* be, and yet Evil *does* exist. But as there are superabundant proofs of the existence of an Almighty Being, so the idea that Evil is not conceivable with a Supreme GOD must knock under to the *fact* that a Finite Mind cannot comprehend the Infinite. So with the Eternity of Punishment. We know nothing about time. Time we are told in Scripture "shall be no more." The Past is gone and is not; the Future has not come, and is not; the Present does not exist, for even as I pronounce the word, it is gone and is not. Eternity is as incomprehensible as is the system in which we live, as is the Great Hidden GOD whom we worship. I wrote (a fact) some few years ago to a revered theologian, and all he could say was as follows:

"Consider two things in connection with it. 1st. It is a negative idea, viz., that the lost will never go to Heaven, and also that we have no idea what eternity in itself involves positively. Succession of thought, the sense of a succession of time is not logically involved in the idea of eternity. Taking punishment to mean pain, there is an infinite number of punishments in degree. There is nothing to show that in a multitude of cases, the only punishment will be the pœna damni. There is also nothing revealed to make it necessary to believe that one and the same individual will for ever have one and the same degree of punishment."

THE RESURRECTION.

P. I shall think over what you have said, and now to return to our former conversations. We discussed the question of Transubstantiation, and I see that what you propounded was the real

theory, although of course "the people" probably have gross notions more or less, but with your way of putting things, how do you get over the notion of a Resurrection of the Flesh or Body, and bodies burning in the flames of Hell? You of course know that no scientific man could for one moment become a Catholic, if it was necessary he should believe such things as I have mentioned.

C. We must draw a distinction between the popular way of stating doctrines and the strictly true way of doing so. A poor *uneducated* Irishman may believe without doubting, that the body he dies in will rise again; he may believe that after the Day of Judgment he will, if wicked, burn in hell with his body all complete, eyes and nose, and legs, one of them perhaps, if he is an old soldier, a wooden one. He may be a good Christian and yet believe these absurdities, and his Confessor will not deem it necessary to explain to him that his views are not correct, nay possibly the Priest knows no better himself, but yet because this may be so, it is not to be supposed that a really educated Priest who has been to a

good foreign college, or better still, to Oxford or Cambridge, or a German University, would either believe or teach such absurdly grotesque notions of the Resurrection of the Body. As long as the world lasts there will be popular Christianity for the mob, and scientific true Christianity for educated men.

When a man dies, his soul leaves Oxygen, Nitrogen, and other gases which in a certain combination have formed the envelope of the soul which we call a man's body. But the body which a man had five days before his death, and that in which he dies are different. Part of his body five days before death became gas, and so became part of the body of dogs if he had any, or of his wife and friends who lived in the same house. The Body he will at the last day rise with, will be a Spiritual Body; the body he died in will ages past have become resolved into gas or atmosphere. The Catholic Church cannot teach an absurdity, and does not do so. St. Paul shows us that it is only on the death of a man that the soul leaves the body, and the body dies, in other words—vanishes. Life springs

from Death. A seed put in the ground must rot and die and then the flower springs from it. This is the meaning of the glorious cry of the Christian, "Oh! Death, where is thy sting?" Death is glorious, since death opens the door to life.

The actual gas in which we die immediately becomes part of other men and animals.

And so I hope you see clearly that a Catholic has no difficulty with respect to the Resurrection of the Body.

P. What you say is reasonable, but I have often heard Priests preach that the actual body a man dies with, will rise again.

C. Priests are not all educated men. I doubt your finding a Jesuit or a Benedictine propounding the nonsense which might be heard from some half-educated Priest.

IDOLATRY.

P. I suppose you will apply the same kind of argument to what we Protestants call "Image Worship" and "Mariolatry?"

C. I hardly know what you mean. I would say that no Christian could if he tried be an Idolater. To be such it is necessary that the thing or Person worshipped should be considered GOD. Would the most ignorant Spanish or Irish Catholic believe the image he kisses and cries over is GOD?

P. No, hardly.

C. Then he cannot be committing Idolatry, however much he may apparently adore the Image.

P. But surely the Blessed Virgin is paid Divine honours by some, and hence is worshipped as GOD?

C. I thought the Blessed Virgin was a woman, and hence could not by any possibility be

worshipped as GOD—since GOD has revealed Himself in Christ who is Perfect *Man* save sin.

P. I thank you for your correction.

CREMATION.

P. It strikes me you would not think Cremation a sin.

C. Certainly I would not, and for the same reasons as I gave when talking about the Resurrection. Besides the Catholic Church has formally sanctioned Cremation.

P. Good gracious, you don't mean to say so?

C. I do most seriously.

P. Well if I were a betting man I would lay five to one she had not.

C. Done. I'll take it.

P. Now to the point.

C. I suppose you will grant that Bishops and Priests could not tacitly sanction a line of action taken by the Church, without approval?

P. I will admit they could not.

C. Then I would beg to draw your attention to the reign of Queen Mary of England, and observe how Catholic Bishops, Priests and laymen, sanctioned Cremation.

P. I am quite in the dark still.

C. Are you, you won't be so very long. Pray may I ask were not live Protestants "Cremated" by Queen Mary and her Bishops? What is Cremation but burning the *bodies* of men? And were not an immense number of Protestants most scientifically Cremated by the Catholic Hierarchy?

P. Upon my word I never thought of that.

C. You see good comes out of evil. Catholics can shake hands with the foremost lover of Cremation, since they have the sanction of Holy Mother Church.

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP.

P. I feel I could accept Catholic Doctrines if they were explained as you have done, and you tell me you express the teaching of the Church.

C. I am not aware of having said one single word which the most notorious heresy-hunter in His Grace's Diocese could find fault with.

P. So far good. But to be practical. If I go into a Catholic Church what do I find? I see an Altar with sham flowers and a Priest dressed in an odiously cut garment very unlike the old Bishops and Priests whose figures repose in our Cathedrals in stone and brass. I see little boys with ugly surplices cut short to their knees—in short I don't see the sublimity which some people talk about. Then again, not one word of praise comes from the mouth of the large congregation assembled. The choir composed often of Protestant singers have it all to themselves and seem to think solos very appropriate accompaniments to Divine Worship.

C. If you had not deprived us of our old

Churches and made us practically a small sect we should not require sometimes to have sham flowers and other tawdry things for want of money to buy better. With respect to the singing, a reform is going on and no one more than the Cardinal Archbishop is desirous that the music should be solemn and worthy of the object for which it is intended.

But after all, what does a Catholic go to Church to do? He goes to worship Christ truly present on the Altars of our Churches. He comes to pay homage to his King and especially at Mass he comes to plead before God, to join in the offering up of the Great Sacrifice which is there performed every day. What does it really matter what the eye beholds? It is the Soul that communes with God—it is the Soul for which we plead God's mercy and His Love.

Images, Holy Water, Beads, are only intended helps to form an image of God on the Soul. The Soul and God are the only two realities, and all forms and ceremonies *per se* are intended only to raise the Soul to God and to assist the soul in adoring God.

Where reverence in God's ministers is apparent, —where the eye sees magnificence and grandeur —when music elevates us—we may be thankful —but were there but a plain wood table and a Priest clothed in rags, still the holy Sacrifice would be offered as truly as at High Mass with utmost magnificence at Notre Dame.

INSUFFICIENCY OF OUR PRESENT KNOWLEDGE TO UNDERSTAND GOD.

P. You have all along laid stress on the spiritual nature of man and of the greatness of GOD; you have said that God is Infinite and not to be comprehended by our finite minds; you have tried to show me that the Catholic Church teaches nothing repugnant to reason, and that GOD is all in all.

C. I have, however imperfectly, tried to do so. I know many men never have felt the

difficulties you and I have done, but in our day many more have done so. Infidelity is so intolerant—is so presumptuous—is so harsh in its judgment of Christians, that by its self-assertion it oftentimes seems to suppress the Christian's apology. It asserts that we know nothing about GOD, because we confess that GOD is not to be comprehended. As well may they say that a partial representation of a thing is necessarily an untrue one.

I feel our conversations must come to a close, and I think I cannot do better than commend to your notice the following passage from Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought.* He writes, "It is the consciousness of the deep wants of our human nature that first awakens GOD's presence in the soul: it is by adapting His Revelation to those wants that GOD graciously condescends to satisfy them. The time may indeed come, though not in this life, when these various manifestations of GOD, "at sundry times and in divers manners," may be seen to be but different sides and partial representations of one and the same Divine Reality; when the light which now gleams in restless flashes from the ruffled waters of the

human soul, will settle into the steadfast image of GOD'S face shining on its unbroken surface. But ere this shall be, that which is perfect must come, and that which is in part must be done away. But as regards the human wisdom, which would lead us to this consummation now, there is but one lesson which it can teach us; and *that* it teaches in spite of itself. It teaches the lesson which the wise king of Israel learned from his own experience: "I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under Heaven: I have seen all the works that are done under the sun: and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit."

And if ever the time should come to any of us, when, in the bitter conviction of that vanity and vexation, we, who would be as Gods in knowledge, wake up only to the consciousness of our own nakedness, happy shall we be, if then we may still hear, ringing in our ears and piercing to our hearts, an echo from that personal life of

Jesus, which our philosophy has striven in vain to pervert or destroy: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

CHRISTIANITY AND ASTRONOMY.

ALTHOUGH the Religion founded by the Apostles on the teaching of Christ was so manly and convincing that men of huge brain-power willingly and gladly embraced it, yet in our day it seems as if its claims were no longer of so convincing a character as heretofore.

The deepest thinkers, and the leaders of the scientific world, are either neutral or opposed to Christianity. There must be a cause for this falling away, and a good cause; for those shallow bigots who declare that science and scientific men cannot have ought in common with Christians are not worth wasting time upon.

This is in an especial manner an age of earnest thought and deep inquiry, and could scientific

men who now oppose Religion, believe, we have every reason to think they would obey their convictions and confess Christ before men.

Many reasons are given in accounting for this deplorable alienation, but the real stumbling-block seems to be the materialistic tendency and teaching of so many Ministers of Religion, which is a subject on which I shall not enter, and the new light thrown on all other matters by the wondrous discoveries made by Astronomers, and brought home *to the knowledge of the million.*

The whole line of religious thought must be altered vastly from what existed in Apostolic times. Then the world was *popularly* considered the great central chief and crowning act of GOD, and the planets were only made for the use of this world. The world was flat, and the heavens were over it, and the stars were holes in the floor of heaven. Heaven itself was "up there," and hell "down" below. The world being thus the chief work of GOD, and man the only thinking creature, there was no cause for astonishment if GOD should especially direct His attention to us, and when, by the abuse of that Free-will with

which He had endowed us, we fell away, it was not utterly inconceivable that His Son should perform that Act of supreme Self-sacrifice on Calvary in order to produce a reconciliation between the Creator and the creature. Not inconceivable was it that Christ should "go up" to Heaven, that He should be lost to sight in the clouds.

We now know that in all probability there are thousands of inhabited worlds besides this little speck on which we live. We know that we are but a mote of dust in the planetary system; that the point of a needle compared with the bulk of the whole of this world does not express sufficiently our nothingness in the vast system of worlds beyond worlds by which we are surrounded. We know there is no "up" or "down," that all those earthly expressions recorded in the Bible were only used by Christ because to have unfolded to simple Galilean peasants the knowledge we now possess would have done them far more harm than good. They were not prepared for it. How then does this knowledge of our nothingness affect Religion?

Vastly, Immensely!

We are now aware that the natural difficulty man had in conceiving the fact of the Incarnation of the GOD of these millions of worlds in this *mote of dust* is increased a thousand-fold by this very knowledge. It is simply inconceivable, looked at simply by the light of reason.

GOD gave man reason, if men use it, they are often paralyzed by the very knowledge it brings. Firstly and chiefly, I hope I have faintly shown the need of charity in judgment of others. But in addition to the difficulties which seem to surround the Christian Revelation, men heedless or ignorant of honest doubts seem bent on presenting Christianity to men in most materialistic forms; they seem bent on driving away valuable minds, by Paganism revived, by carnal gross notions of the Saviour of mankind. The only way by which scientific men can with their heart *and* intellect combined, become Christians, is to hold fast the saying of our Lord, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." I do not mean minimize Christian Belief, but that we must realize that there are only two existing things in the Uni-

verse of God, and those two things are GOD and *my Soul.*

There is no other reality. When I assert as a fact, which both philosopher and doctor knows, that no man has in this world *ever seen his wife* or wife her husband (unless oxygen gas, etc., be the wife or husband), or father his child, but only an outward ever-changing clothing of the soul, you will grasp better the consciousness of what a mere phantom this world is,—and man a ghost, who for a few years is confined to a gaseous clothing in a world which is with the whole planetary system, rushing headlong—GOD knows where!

I say rightly then that there is no other *Reality* but MY SOUL and GOD. Fire can burn up the Universe, and then nothing of this huge creation will remain but what is spiritual,—that is, the SOUL.

It is in grasping with all our power this one great main thought that we can steady our brain and soul in this mad chaotic existence wherein GOD hides Himself from us as far as nature goes,*

* See "The Past and Future of our Earth," by R. A. Proctor, in the *Contemporary* for December, 1874.

and shows His existence only by *Conscience* the voice of the Soul. GOD has revealed Himself in Christ, this I believe and *all its consequences*, hence I am a Roman Catholic.

There may be, nay, I suppose there are, thousands who feel no love for sceptics, who never enter into the seeming difficulties I have so lightly touched on. Well let them not be as the proud Pharisee in the Temple. If they have grasped and apprehended the fact that the Catholic Church is the teacher of Christianity let them not condemn their brothers whose faith is erroneous, or even imperfect, because the result of *hardly* gained conviction. "He that is not *against* us is with us."

So said the Teacher of men.

If men believe in the Almighty, in Conscience as the voice of GOD, in Christ as GOD revealing Himself to man, in the absolute destructibility of all matter, and in the final analysis—the existence of the Soul and GOD—let those who hold the true Faith realize that the difficulties felt by their less fortunate brethren are honest, and as honest so not to be condemned.

PART II.

WHILE thus trying to show how much charity should exist in our day, and that, not through indifference, but because our knowledge is greater and more diffused than in former ages, I wish to give, if I can, a few aids to those whose minds are unsettled through the difficulties I have indicated. A few hints are all I profess to give; may they be of use to some readers.

If Christ be GOD, as Christians believe, then as GOD HE knows what we know about Astronomy. It may be said by some, "My belief in Christ as GOD is not more than problematical, and did HE know what *we* know."

Mr. Disraeli has made some observations which are very helpful.

He reminds us that Hipparchus, who lived *before* Christ, discovered the precession of the equinoxes, thus neutralizing the idea that Astronomical discoveries are a modern production. I give an extract:—

"It is a vulgar belief that our astronomical knowledge dates only from the recent century, when it was rescued from the monks who imprisoned Galileo; but Hipparchus, who lived before our Divine Master, and who, among other sublime achievements, discovered the precession of the equinoxes, ranks with the Newtons and the Keplers, and Copernicus, the modern father of our celestial science, avows himself, in his famous work, as only the champion of Pythagoras, whose system he enforces and illustrates."

Were Christ not Divine, yet His philosophy is the noblest ever breathed on earth, and in His learned disputes in the Temple with the Scientific World we have a glimpse of His wondrous mental power,—even if only human!!

Are we to suppose that Christ and His Apostle, the highly educated Paul, were grossly ignorant of the *then existing knowledge* of Astronomy? Decidedly not. But if it be asked why such mundane and infantine notions were held in the Christian Church, when, to say the least, Christ and St. Paul knew more, it may well be answered that all knowledge is not wholesome, that we

teach children in a different manner to what we do men, and this fact is stated by our Lord when He said to His Disciples, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

Christianity was received by many of the Jewish Priests, and also the nobles of the Roman Court, and although the Judaic Christians of Galilee may have been children in their knowledge of the sciences, yet it would be contrary to reason to suppose that amid all those noble and lofty minded men who embraced Christianity at Alexandria,—none knew the outlines of Astronomy.

The great thought which comes into our mind when studying Astronomy is the infinite greatness of the Heavens, the infinite minuteness of our little world.

But is this difference anything new to the soul of man? Had the ancients no idea of it?

This is a question about which no doubt exists. The author of Psalm viii. 3, 4, might have been a nineteenth century doubter or believer.

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou

hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him and the son of man that Thou visitest him?" Jesus of Nazareth read these lines, and in this fact when entered into and thought upon is a sufficient answer to *Christian* doubters.

Not only did He read these lines but He knew the Book of Job, where speaking of the creation of Orion and other stars, the writer adds, "Who doth things great and incomprehensible and wonderful of which there is no number."

Astronomy has added to our knowledge, but it has simply *added.* The knowledge we now possess is fuller and deeper than in former ages, but it is not so great that in Judaic or early Christian times there were no difficulties to belief such as *now* press on men.

And as men with their *then* vast knowledge became believers in God, and in Christ Jesus, with or in spite of *their* knowledge of astronomy, so in our day may men do likewise.

CONCLUSION.

While then it seems that astronomy need not present insuperable difficulties to belief, it most certainly does show (and thank GOD for it) that the miserable bickerings and quarrels in which we indulge are unworthy of our position. We are, as men, the very most insignificant of insignificant beings, while as the children of GOD and of a GOD whose work is so stupendous we should feel shame in passing our short stay here in a manner so unworthy of that timeless and boundless immensity which awaits us and into which we shall so soon enter.

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